



EAST AND
HORN OF
AFRICA
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
PROJECT
(EHAHRDP)

Report to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on the Performance of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

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January – June 2006

Centre for Refugee Studies, York University

Regional Coordination Office

**EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROJECT
(EHAHRDP)**

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Report to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on the Performance of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

January – June 2006

Synthesis

The East and Horn of Africa held a conference in Entebbe, Uganda October 30 – November 4 2005, which was extremely successful.

Subsequent to the conference, Project Coordinator Hassan Shire Sheikh sought funding to continue to develop this project from NOVIB, the European Union and the National Endowment for Democracy. Funding was to commence by mid 2006 (June). It was essential that the project receive funding to continue the network coordination during the six months prior to June 2006. IDRC provided additional funds to those already disbursed as part of the Grant Agreement No. 103090-002 to cover the period January 1 – June 30, 2006. This grant was administered by the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University. The following report describes the activities and outcomes of the project.

1 Background

The period of January to June 2006 proved eventful for Uganda and the EHAHRDP team.

The first multi-party elections in Uganda since 1981 were averagely peaceful and returned the incumbent President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and his NRM party for another five-year term of office. However, despite the general calm reflected on the day of the Presidential and Parliamentary Election (February 23rd 2006), the run-up to the elections was marred by irregularities, unfairness and incidents of voter intimidation as reflected by the reports from election observers that included local human rights organisations. One case in point was the government's arrest of the main challenger, also Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) President, Rtd. Col. Dr. Kizza Besigye. He was charged with rape and treason though the former charge was dismissed by court while the latter still awaits verdict. The arrest late last year resulted into unrest not only in the capital Kampala but also around the country.

There were also cases of intimidation directed at journalists and media houses discussing election-related issues to which EHAHRDP added a voice in condemning such acts against the Freedom of expression entrenched in Article 19 of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (See EHAHRD-Net Index: UGA 008/008/2006 (Public) 03 February 2006, Kampala: *Uganda Government Must Observe Media Freedom*).

Another example for an unlevelled playing field was the alleged illegal use of state resources such as government vehicles for campaign activities of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) candidates. Incidents of violence occurred topped by the death of two supporters during a rally of FDC leader Kizza Besigye in Mengo, Kampala, caused by aimless shooting by a government official whose car had been stopped by the crowd. Many observers rated the electoral process as not completely free and fair due to these and other instances.¹

The results were subsequently challenged through a petition in the Supreme Court by Dr. Besigye who was the runner up in the Presidential elections. However, the Ugandan Supreme Court ruled against the plea for nullification of the election arguing that the cited irregularities were not sufficient enough to overturn the incumbent's victory.

By now the new cabinet has been appointed, showing many familiar faces and increased personalisation of the state. One such example is the designation of the President's brother as Minister for Micro Finance despite his well-known involvement in cases of bribery and financial mismanagement. The new parliament has also been sworn-in with the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) taking the mandate as Leader of Opposition in the House, having emerged with majority MPs from the opposition side. The period of January to June 2006 was furthermore marked by increased infringement on press freedom in several of the Network's member countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia and most recently Kenya (Ref: *EHAHRD-Net Press Statements January to March 2006*). The raid by Kenyan police on the Standard Newspaper and Kenya Television Network (KTN) (owned by the Standard Media Group), and the subsequent arrest of several journalists in connection with stories surrounding President Mwai Kibaki, are just one sign of the deteriorating relationship between the Kenyan government and the media.

The situation in Ethiopia remains unchanged with HRDs being harassed, detained or forced to remain in exile. The space for civil society organizations is continuously shrinking hindering the proper execution of their work. High profile human rights organizations like EHAHRD-Net's member, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), are still not able to monitor and report on human rights violations due to the heavy hand of authorities used against them.

The Sudanese government continues to infringe on the rights of HRDs and organizations working to protect the human rights of the Sudanese people. Arbitrary arrest and detention without trial and repeated infringement on media freedom have shown the Government's disregard of international human rights instruments it is signatory to and have provoked a strong petition from EHAHRD-Net calling on

¹ More detailed information about the election process can be found in Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) 2006 Election Report 25th February 2006. Kampala, Uganda.

authorities to respect international human rights standards, accord a fair trial to those arrested and ensure for a safe working environment of HRDs.

EHAHRDP and its Network members will continue to monitor the situations they arise throughout the region, and will take necessary measures to ensure redress.

2 Activities of EHAHRDP

2.1 Fund-raising activities

The five-year strategic plan that had been drafted late last year was updated and refined and sent out to several possible donors including Oxfam-Novib and members of the donor Human Rights Working Group in Kampala (see further information in section 2.2). The overall plan was broken down into annual working plans supported by a logical framework that clearly spells out the objectives, expected results and indicators of successful implications which shall help donor agencies to establish the feasibility and the impact of planned activities easily.

Subsequently, the EHAHRDP team decided to transform the entire strategic plan into a logical framework format to allow for consistent review and evaluation of implemented activities and achievement of expected outcomes.

Most of the donor agencies the proposal had been submitted to, have informed us that they are currently reviewing it to establish possible areas of support and a response can be expected soon.

EHAHRDP submitted a proposal to KIOS, a Finnish NGO, for funding of a three-day sub-regional journalist workshop that intends to bring together 40 journalists and human rights defenders from the sub-region to create and deepen awareness among journalists about human rights work especially in situations of armed conflict, sensitise them on political, legal and psycho-social challenges faced by HRDs on the frontline and use the joint presence of journalists and HRDs to devise a strategy for cooperation and mutual support for advancing human rights and enhancing HRDs' protection. The organisation's Board of Directors is currently deciding over the application and a reply from their side is expected soon.

EHAHRDP has further strengthened linkages with like-minded organizations. One indicator is the planned training for Kenyan HRDs for November 2006 that will be organized jointly with the Human Rights House Foundation, Norway and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), Switzerland. EHAHRDP has submitted a proposal to ISHR for partial funding and is currently searching for additional funding with the help of the Norwegian group and ISHR itself.

2.2 Meeting with stakeholders

On 26 January 2006, the EHAHRDP Chairperson met with the Horn and East Africa Team of Oxfam-Novib in The Hague, The Netherlands. He presented to them a summary of the five year strategic plan that had been prepared earlier and engaged in bilateral discussions on several issues including possible areas of support and cooperation. The presentation was received enthusiastically and invited the submission of the entire strategic plan which is currently under review by the organisation.

On 21 February 2006, a delegation from the EHAHRDP Secretariat - led by Ms. Sophie Kyagulanyi, Board Member and Uganda Focal Person, Ms. Nora Rehmer, EHAHRDP Programme Officer and Mr. Yared Hailemariam, HRD from Ethiopia and then an intern with EHAHRDP and Amnesty International Africa Regional Office - attended the meeting of the Human Rights Working Group comprising of major donor institutions active in the fields of human rights in Uganda and currently chaired by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR). This meeting was made possible by the active lobbying of Esther Loeffen, Legal Sector Advisor at the Dutch Embassy in Kampala, emphasising the potential of the Project to the members of the group

The meeting started with a brief introduction of the attendees and proceeded with EHAHRDP's presentation that first explained the organisational structure of the Network, the role of the existing entities and the implementing function of the Secretariat, i.e. the East and Horn of Africa HRDs Project. Mr. Yared Hailemariam, a HRD from Ethiopia, then gave testimony of his work as a HRD and the threats faced from the Ethiopian Government that made him flee his country which clearly justified the need for a HRDs' Network in the sub-region.

A summarized version of EHAHRDP's work and especially its activities planned for the period 2006 – 2010 was presented, highlighting several major activities and their expected outcomes/impact. This allowed time for questions by members of the working group that concentrated on the outreach of the activities, the challenges of networking throughout the sub-region and specific needs for support. The participants of the meeting were supplied with the Network's profile, the Plan of Action and the Declaration, all a result of last year's HRDs Conference, as well as copies of the summarized proposal 2006-2010 and its projected budget.

Several members expressed great interest in the work of the Project and requested further information on the proposal as well as previous work of the Network. EHAHRDP is currently in close negotiations with the Dutch Embassy over funding opportunities and effective cooperation.

On May 15, the EHAHRDP team briefed Ambassadors and delegates of embassies of European Union countries on the state of human rights defenders. A particular focus was put on the challenges faced by women human rights defenders and minority rights defenders. The team was supported by one of its Network members, a Ugandan LGBT

activist currently in hiding for her human rights work. The meeting was initiated by the Austrian Embassy, currently holding the EU Presidency, with relation to the EU campaign on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD) throughout 2006. The participants showed a keen interest in the problems highlighted by the EHAHRDP team and the recommendation given for possible intervention in their capacity as diplomatic missions. EHAHRDP agreed to continuously update the Embassies on current development with regards to HRDs and future involvement in its campaigns on behalf of activists.

A subsequent meeting of the EHAHRDP Programme Officer with the German Ambassador upon his request allowed for a more detailed discussion of the topic and highlighting areas of cooperation. The Ambassador, who will be taking over the EU Presidency among the EU Embassies in the next term, assured the Project of his support and particular willingness to use the specific powers of a diplomatic mission in attending to the problems of individual human rights defenders. EHAHRDP resolved to more deeply involve Embassies in future activities due to the positive reception shown by the diplomatic staff.

2.3 Launch of EHAHRDP website

With the assistance of the Centre for Refugee Studies, EHAHRDP was able to launch its website (<http://www.yorku.ca/crs/AHRDP/index.html>) hosted by York University, Canada. The website will inform users about EHAHRDP's structure, its work, achievements and planned activities. It furthermore introduces the EHAHRDP staff by providing a short professional biography. Links to relevant documents like existing protection mechanisms or stakeholder organisations in the protection of HRDs give an insight on current efforts to improve the protection and working environment of HRDs in the sub-region and beyond. The team has recently compiled profiles for each of its member countries highlighting its political past and present challenges to the work of HRDs. The profiles were sent out to the respective country's focal persons for review and comments. After incorporating their feedback, the profiles were sent to the website manager at York University who will make them available online shortly.

It is envisaged that the website is expanded into a resource and documentation centre aiming at providing detailed information on EHAHRDP's members, the situation of HRDs throughout the region and achievements made in the protection of HRDs.

2.4 Advocacy

EHAHRDP continued to monitor and make interventions on behalf of HRDs at risk in the form of public statements and petitions (see Annex). This aims at making discrimination, intimidation and the violation of HRDs' rights more widely known by

emphasizing their unlawfulness and call on the authorities to observe and respect human rights according to the international standards they are signatory to. EHAHRDP shares this vital information with a steadily growing number of media institutions and stakeholders thereby publicizing the struggle and plight of HRDs to a wider audience. Several of its statements were published on prominent national-based websites in the region as well as European and North-American websites with a focus on human rights, e.g. Africa Files (<http://www.africafiles.org>) and Human Rights House Foundation – Norway (<http://www.humanrightshouse.org>), which can be seen as an indicator for the wide interest in the work of HRDs and their role in protecting human rights.

EHAHRDP's statements furthermore informed print media in their reporting about the violation of HRDs' rights including their own as in the case of the raid and subsequent closure of the Kenyan newspaper, The Standard (The Nation, 2 March 2006) or the deportation of Mr. Blake Lambert, a British journalist working in Uganda for allegedly publishing information critical to state security (The Daily Monitor, 15 March 2006).

With reference to the recently held presidential and parliamentary elections, two EHAHRDP staff participated in election observation together with the team from its member organization, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI). The EHAHRDP team was able to observe proceedings at around ten polling stations in a suburb of Kampala noting slight irregularities in some locations. However, most of them could be accounted to the ignorance of the acting polling officials rather than intended compromising of the voting process. The team's report together with those of other observers formed FHRI's report on the election, rating the elections not free and fair due to irregularities and an unlevelled playing field that specifically marked the campaign period.

EHAHRDP's media officer organised a One Day Journalists Workshop that took place on the 27th of April 2006. To that effect, at least 30 Ugandan journalists from across print and electronic media houses attended. They were briefed about HRDs and their work, existing protection mechanisms and possible linkages of the media to HRDs in support for their cause. The activity aimed at sensitizing journalists on their role in the protection of human rights and created awareness among journalists of being HRDs themselves with a wide range of opportunities to improve the respect for human rights through their work. EHAHRDP furthermore used the opportunity to introduce itself to the general public through the media, lay out its vision and mission and illustrate the need for closer cooperation with the media in implementation of its programmes for the effective protection of HRDs. This aimed at the creation of viable formal and informal channels for regular information exchange on human rights issues.

On the whole, the workshop followed a two-fold objective: 1) to educate journalists on HRDs, existing protection mechanisms and their role as HRDs themselves, and 2) create practical linkages with media houses for continued effective information exchange on HRDs issues.

Presentations at the workshop were made by; the Chairperson, on journalists as HRDs and their role in improving the human rights situation; Mr. Otsieno Namwaya (HRD

under EHAHRDP protection then) on the media situation in Kenya with regard to the human rights movement and Mr. Yared Hailemariam's account on his work as HRD. The presentations were received by the journalists with enthusiasm as helpful.

Many of the journalists expressed keen interest in closer cooperation with EHAHRDP and gave voice to their increased motivation to work for the improvement of human rights in Uganda by documenting violations and share them with relevant stakeholders. Some journalists used the opportunity to give testimony of the harassment they faced by the media and expressed appreciation for having been educated on existing protection mechanisms and the existence of the Network as a partner in protection. Since then, all the journalists that attended, continuously receive EHAHRDP information including its public statements, and some (statements) have been featured in the media

As a result of the November 2005 HRDs Conference for the East and Horn of Africa, a report was compiled by the conference rapporteur. Since then, EHAHRDP has engaged in a continuous exchange with Amnesty International (AI) – International Secretariat on the finalisation of the report. Jointly an Action Sheet was developed that outlines all avenues to achieve highest possible publication of the report among the media, human rights organisations and other stakeholders. An electronic copy of the report will be sent to all Network members with the advice to use this opportunity for lobbying and publicising the challenges faced by HRDs and lessons learnt indicated in the report. Country focal persons throughout the region will receive printed copies via mail for wider dissemination. The report will furthermore be sent to the Governments of the region and any other relevant authority with regard to HRDs, such as the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. This intends to inform them of the existence of the Network, the on-going exchange and existing support for HRDs and aims at initiating a stimulating discussion on authorities' responsibility in HRD protection and improved implementation of existing instruments.

The report will be launched jointly by AI and EHAHRDP on the 30th of June, 2006 in Kampala, Uganda and Toronto, Canada. Relevant stakeholders such as delegates of resident embassies, active human rights organisations, the media and individual HRDs are invited to be briefed on the outcome of the conference documented in the report and the way forward for better protection as stipulated in the Declaration and Plan of Action attached. The report will later be made available in the dominant languages of the sub-region, i.e. Amharic, Arabic, Somali and Tigrinya, to achieve widest possible accessibility by human rights defenders on the ground. Both, AI and EHAHRDP will provide access to all versions on their websites (www.amnesty.org, www.yorku.ca/crs/AHRDP/home.htm).

The report will later form the basis of detailed research on HRDs issues in the sub-region by AI that will result in a comprehensive report informing a joint HRD Campaign for Action scheduled for November 2006. EHAHRDP will continue to work closely with AI and all its relevant sections in preparation for the campaign.

Another important achievement of the Network was the Chairperson's attendance of the Forum on the Participation of NGOs in the 39th Ordinary Session of the African

Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in Banjul, The Gambia from May 5-11, 2006 preceding the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights. This was made possible by the kind facilitation of Amnesty International, Dutch Section. The Chairperson Mr. Hassan Shire Sheikh participated in several meetings and discussions such as the discussion on the "New Challenges and Opportunities for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Africa", presented the report on the situation of HRDs in the sub-region highlighting the plight of Eritrean prisoners of conscience and the deterioration of media freedom in Kenya, participated in the Session for Special Interest Groups from which most of the resolutions to the African Commission meeting came up and attended the seminar on "Ensuring the implementation of ACHPR rulings" convened by Amnesty International Netherlands. The Chairperson further held meetings with the Africa Commission's Special Rapporteur on HRDs, Madame Reine Alapini-Gansou, inviting her for a fact-finding visit on the situation of HRDs in the sub-region.

Mr. Shire also participated in a meeting between the Kenyan delegates and the Under Secretary General of the UN in Charge of Prosecuting of War Crimes in Rwanda, Hassan Bubacar Jallow. The meeting resulted in a petition to the Government of Kenya on the arrest and surrender of Mr. Felician Kabuga, alleged genocidaire from Rwanda currently living in Kenya. The Petition was unanimously adopted by members at the Forum and was widely distributed. The Network took the opportunity to start the process of obtaining Observer Status from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

In general, this visit can be summarized as a vital contribution by the Network to the proceedings of this regional body and a well-utilised opportunity to extent the Network's contact base on the continent and abroad.

2.5 Protection

In the area of protection, EHAHRDP was able accomplish several achievements. An appeal for emergency assistance on behalf of Mr. Yared Hailemariam, Investigator with the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) who had to remain in Uganda after the November 2005 HRDs Conference due to threats to his personal security, were successfully answered by Novib-Oxfam pledging a one-time emergency grant of € 5000. Mr. Hailemariam received the grant via the organisation's account to cover expenses for communication, health care, basic needs and financial support for his family that to date remains in Ethiopia.

Like Mr. Hailemariam, Mr. Kifle Mulat, President of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association (EFJA), had to remain in Uganda due to risk of immediate arrest upon return to Ethiopia. However, due to the limited validity of his current passport, his ability to travel outside Uganda was hampered. With support from EHAHRDP however, Mr. Mulat was able to obtain refugee travel documents that allowed for secure

movement beyond Uganda's borders and enabled him to attend several conferences and seminars in Belgium, Tanzania and The Netherlands.

On a later occasion, EHAHRDP had a chance to again assist Mr. Hailemariam with obtaining a visa for Belgium where he had been invited to testify before the the Hearing Session of the Extraordinary Joint Meeting of the EU Members of Parliament Committee on Development & Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Human Rights on the situation of HRDs in Ethiopia. Mr. Hailemariam who had continued his courageous work while in exile in Uganda has prepared a presentation proving extrajudicial killings of more than 100 individuals by the Ethiopian government during public demonstrations in June and November 2005. EHAHRDP was able to facilitate his participation by securing financial support for his travel expenses from a well-known donor institution in The Netherlands. Due to the high sensitivity of his presentation, EHAHRDP together with AI and Mr. Hailemariam decided that a return to Uganda would bear too high a risk for his personal security. So it was resolved that Mr. Hailemariam remains in Belgium from where his third-country resettlement is currently processed. However, the Project was able to keep in contact with Mr. Hailemariam who is one of the most active members of the Network.

In the case of Mr. Otsieno Namwaya, EHAHRDP was able to be of assistance in lobbying for emergency funds. Mr. Namwaya is an investigative reporter writing for the Kenyan newspaper, *The Standard*. He had to flee his country due to threats to his personal safety as a result of his investigative work that links the first family to alleged drug trafficking and other high level corruption. While still in Kenya, he and several of his colleagues were approached by security officials demanding the hand-over of a dossier that is supposedly in Mr. Namwaya's possession. The raids on *The Standard* offices seemed to be only a smokescreen to obtain the material about the first family's involvement in these cases. Several incidents including a personal call from the President's wife threatening Mr. Namwaya over the said documents as well as security personnel observing his residence, suggested serious personal risks if he remained in the country. A first appeal to Frontline for emergency funds was successful and allowed Mr. Namwaya to leave Kenya and come to Kampala, Uganda for an anticipated period of two months that was expected to allow the situation in Kenya to calm down and assess the security situation from a safe haven. Unfortunately, the amount granted to Mr. Namwaya in the first place was less than sufficient due to unpredictable expenses in Kampala. However, EHAHRDP's second call on donors to fill the financial gap was again successful, leading *Frontline* to cover the entire anticipated costs of his stay. (An offer by CPJ to bridge the gap had to be turned down as Mr. Namwaya's financial needs had already been covered by Frontline). Mr. Namwaya worked from EHAHRDP's offices in the Human Rights House pursuing research on media freedom in East Africa. The EHAHRDP team tried to be of as much assistance as possible in enabling Mr. Namwaya to pursue his work and facilitate his stay and any logistical needs as far as possible. His expertise as an investigative journalist was of help during his presentation at the One Day Journalist Workshop in April describing the current state of the Kenyan media with regard to the human rights situation. Since then the security situation was

evaluated as having stabilized and Mr. Namwaya returned to Kenya in May where he resumed his work with *The Standard*.

3 Conclusion and prospects

The first year of the Project's existence can be described as an accomplishment as it saw the establishment of a running office that functions as the Network's Secretariat and witnessed the successful execution of several activities in the areas of advocacy, capacity building and protection.

The coming months will be dedicated to the follow up of implemented activities and evaluating their impact, deepening existing contacts with members and stakeholders in the protection of HRDs and intensifying the Network's lobbying work with a special focus on approaching relevant authorities in the member countries.

First on the agenda is the widest possible distribution of the report "Defending the Defenders": a Human Rights Defenders Conference" that is the result of last November's HRDs Conference in Entebbe. By making the document available to fellow human rights organisations; national, regional and international authorities; the wider public and the courageous human rights defenders on the ground, the lessons learnt will find wider circulation and the content of important documents such as the Plan of Action and the Declaration of the Network will be shared with a wider group of stakeholders. This will also raise the profile of the Network and make its work known to potential new members. The availability of the report in the major languages of the sub-region (Amharic, Arabic, Somali and Tigrinya) will furthermore foster the dissemination and utilisation.

In the longer perspective, the report will be the basis for in-depth research by AI International in cooperation with HRDs in the sub-region to compile a comprehensive piece on the status and challenges of HRDs in the region of the East and Horn of Africa that will inform a joint Campaign for Action on HRDs by EHAHRDN and AI in the sub-region. The active involvement of Network members will ensure the relevance and impact of the campaign action.

Another important task EHAHRDP is set to accomplish in the coming months is to obtain observer status with regional and international bodies such as the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights and the newly formed UN Human Rights Council. This is believed to provide EHAHRD-Net with the opportunity to speak out on behalf of HRDs from the sub-region to a wider forum of stakeholders and actively participate in the decision-making process of these organisations. It is anticipated that the participation at their sessions will allow for highlighting pressing issues and general challenges of HRDs in the sub-region or specific countries and subsequently led to the incorporation of these issues in petitions and work plans of these institutions. Ideally, it will lead to direct response by these stakeholders. The importance of EHAHRD-Net's participation became obvious during Mr. Sheikh's participation at the ACHPR's 39th Ordinary Session in Banjul, in May this year. The opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with like-minded organisations and individuals, the direct interaction with

influential members such as the Special Rapporteur on HRDs and the active advocacy on emergency issues will greatly enhance the Networks impact and advocacy potential on behalf of its members and other HRDs in the region.

With regard to the currently well established ties with the diplomatic community and donor agencies in Uganda, the Secretariat will continue to involve these actors in its activities as much as possible. Their financial and political influence will not only be valuable when seeking assistance for individual HRDs at risk but also in any other activity related to the Network's activities in the area of advocacy and capacity building. A specifically close link will be maintained to the human rights officers in the respective institutions to ensure effective exchange of information and rally for support in all relevant matters. EHAHRDP will furthermore seek financial or technical assistance for any activity that falls in line with the institutions' development priorities.

Another major focus of EHAHRDP's activities will continue to be the protection of individual HRDs at risk. The first-hand assistance provided will consist of lobbying for emergency funds where necessary, provided general guidance on security matters and interaction with authorities (where applicable) and link HRDs to stakeholder organisations that are able to provide training or opportunities for the continuation of their work.

The Secretariat will continue its efforts to ensure the smooth running of office procedures and regular information exchange with Network members, the media and like-minded organisations. It will furthermore seek to solicit funds from various donors for the implementation and/or continuation of important activities aiming at the realisation of the Network's mission, i.e. to maximize the protection of HRDs working in the sub-region, to establish an online resource centre on HRDs that serves researcher, students and HRDs within and outside the sub-region, and to enhance the awareness of human rights work through linkages with national, regional and international like-minded entities.

The team at the Secretariat intends to maintain the continuous exchange of information and views on all relevant topics with its members and partners. By this, it is hoped to satisfy all expectations regarding the Project's performance and accountability and thereby secure support and improved impact. Consultation and transparency will continue to guide the Secretariat's interaction with all stakeholders aiming at best possible outcomes.

4 Annex

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SUD 001/006/2006 (Public)

05 January 2006

KAMPALA: Concern over the arrest of Sudan Al-Sahafa columnist: possible re-arrest and unfair trial

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) has expressed concern over the arrest of *Al-Sahafa* columnist Zuhair Al-Sarraj. The arrest followed the victim's writing expressing his opinion presupposing Sudan President's indifference towards the problems of Sudan citizens.

According to *Reporters Without Borders*, it is reported that Al-Sarraj received a phone call from the media and press department of the national security forces on the evening of 30 December 2005 ordering him to report to the Amarat district police station in Khartoum. After being interrogated for an hour, he is said to have been later transferred to police headquarters and questioned for another four hours.

He was then put in Kober prison and was not taken before the Khartoum prosecutor until 2nd January 2006, when *Al-Sahafa* editor Adil Albaz was also brought before the prosecutor. The two were then interrogated for five hours. The prosecutor finally freed them on bail after notifying them that they would be prosecuted for "insulting the president."

Al-Sarraj wrote on 30 December 2005 that Sudanese citizens had addressed complaints to President Omar el-Bashir, but it seemed as though "the person addressed is not alive."

EHAHRD-Net would like to stress the responsibility of the Sudan government towards the media fraternity as pledged in the July lifting of press censorship and asks

government in the same vein to observe its citizens' freedom of speech provided for by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration clearly states in Article 19, that "*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and _expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*" herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

"The media is a watchdog of society and plays an important role in ensuring accountability, checks and balances in public offices. The Government and its machinery must therefore desist from any actions calculated to hinder the duties of the media," says Hassan Shire Sheikh the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net. "Such unprecedented arrests and threats as reported are a clear manifestation of the government's continued crackdown on the rights of journalists, and this is absolutely uncalled for. Besides, the victim, being a known columnist, ought to be treated with understanding and be accorded his right of speech without hindrance," adds Hassan Shire.

The Network wishes to emphasize that journalists are human rights defenders who must enjoy the protection provided for by the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders which stresses in its first Article that *the right individually and in association with others, to promote and strive for the realisation of human and fundamental rights* must be observed. The Sudan government must therefore observe this right and similar others without fail.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls on the Sudan government to unconditionally drop the charges against this journalist and also calls on the government to be impartial while judging his case.

The Network further calls upon all the human rights defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Sudan government and other stakeholders to make this call a reality.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: ETHIO 002/003/2006 (Public)

06 January 2006

KAMPALA: MEDIA HARASSMENT PERSISTS IN ETHIOPIA

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) in its continued monitoring of the events in Ethiopia following the riots in November 2005, has noted with concern the continued detention without fair trial of a number of human rights defenders.

In the most recent development, EHAHRD-Net has received information that some CUD leaders, journalists and civic organization leaders facing charges of treason and genocide were refused bail. "The majority of the charges carry sentences of above 15 years imprisonment, so after hearing the evidence, we have decided to refuse bail," said Judge Adil Ahmed. The court adjourned the case to the next hearing scheduled for 23 February 2006.

Some 129 opposition leaders, journalists and activists are facing charges of attempting to overthrow the government during violent demonstrations against the outcome of parliamentary elections, a crime punishable by death or life imprisonment according to Ethiopian government laws while other 94 defendants including two teenage boys face genocide charges and 42 are charged with high treason. Other offences include conspiracy and armed uprising. At least 32 people living in exile will be tried in absentia, although police announced in court that they had apprehended two more of the accused in northern Ethiopia.

In the Declaration unanimously adopted by HRDs from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and International Partners from Canada, Germany, Norway, UK, the U.S and the Netherlands, meeting at the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference, organised by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Centre for Refugee Studies at York University and Amnesty International Africa Regional office, held at the Windsor Lake Victoria Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda from 30 October to 4 November 2005; they called on the Ethiopian government and indeed all other governments in the region "to recognise the legitimacy and important role Human Rights Defenders play in the promotion and consolidation of peace, human rights, good governance, democracy and the rule of law."

“It is the duty of the Ethiopian federal government therefore to observe the provisions of the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, and other Human Rights Declarations to which it is a signatory,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson for EHAHRD-Net

Article 12 (1 and 2) of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders states that *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and that The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation de facto or de jure, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”*

Article 6 of the African Charter for Human and People’s rights adopted on June 27, 1981 provides that *everyone shall have the right to liberty and security of his person, No one may be deprived of his freedom for reasons and conditions previously laid down by law, and no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.* Article 7 of the same Charter continues that *“Every individual shall have the right to have his cause heard...”*

With such threats levied against these human rights defenders, their rights as stipulated in the above International Instruments are being unfairly violated.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls on the Ethiopian federal government to unconditionally drop the charges against the said HRDs arrested under unclear circumstances, or effect a speedy and fair trial of their case. It also calls on the government to be impartial while judging their case.

The Network further calls upon all the human rights defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Ethiopian government and other stakeholders to observe the above mentioned international obligations without fail.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SOMA 003/005/2006 (Public)

16 January 2006

KAMPALA: MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY FOLLOWING THE RELEASE OF SOMALI JOURNALISTS

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) welcomes the release of Faysal Jama' Adan, Jamal Suleyman Warsame Director, Editor, and a technician of Radio Las Anod respectively. The three were arrested allegedly due to divisive programmes that were running on the station concerning vaccination of various diseases.

Whereas the EHAHRD-Net welcomes the release of the said victims, it wishes to remind the Federal Government that Media freedom is not granted by the government but is a provision of international human rights instruments which must be adhered to.

“The act by the Regional Security Committee of releasing the victims while on the other hand keeping the radio station closed cannot be seen as an act of goodwill. People must be free to give their opinions not only on vaccination but any other issues that concern them, without interference from those in authority,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net. “The media is a watchdog of society and plays an important role of ensuring accountability, checks and balances in public offices. This mandate cannot be achieved when the journalists’ freedom of expression is being unduly hindered by the strong arm of government authorities and to this end, government must desist from any actions calculated to create media bias,” Shire adds.

The Network emphasizes the responsibility of the Somali Federal Government towards the media fraternity and asks for the observance of freedom of speech as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration clearly states in Article 19, that “*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*” herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

BACKGROUND

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) recently broke the news of fresh attacks on journalists by police forces in Las Anod City of Sool, later closing down Radio Las Anod. NUSOJ is a founding member of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net)

The Saturday morning police raid on the station saw the arrest of the Director, Faysal Jama' Adan, Editor of the Radio Jamal Suleyman Warsame and a technician though the case against them could not immediately be verified.

Reports however say that the arrest followed allegations that the station was airing divisive views of the people in Las Anod concerning diversion of children's vaccination program from Las Anod to Garowe, the headquarters of Puntland. The vaccination against Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Measles,

Hepatitis and Tetanus was scheduled to start in Las Anod on Saturday 14 January.

APPEAL

EHAHRD-Net calls upon the Somali authorities to stop the harassment of journalists and undue threats to their genuine mandate of providing the listeners with balanced information. Such arrests without prior warning or consensus on the flow of events send scare waves to the rest of the media fraternity and must be stopped.

EHAHRD-Net further calls for the immediate re-opening of Radio Las Anod and assures the media fraternity in Somalia of full support in trying to ensure total observance of internationally recognised human rights instruments that guarantee their freedom.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SOMA 004/005/2006 (Public)

17 January 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net WELCOMES RE-OPENING OF SOMALI RADIO

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) wishes to commend the step taken by the Puntland authorities in Somalia to re-open Radio Las Anod after it was originally closed following misunderstandings between its management and government authorities. The re-opening comes a day after three employees of the same station, Faysal Jama' Adan, Jamal Suleyman Warsame Director, Editor, and a technician of the radio respectively accused of broadcasting divisive information were released by the authorities to continue with their daily duties.

Much as the EHAHRD-Net welcomes the re-opening the station, it calls upon the Federal Government to always and unconditionally respect the freedom of the media which is by law provided, and recognised by international human rights instruments.

The Network further emphasizes that this particular freedom is not granted by the government and therefore any interference is an adamant violation of the law.

“The government must not interfere in the activities of media instruments especially if they are aimed at providing the people with balanced information. Censorship of the media is a predicament in a sense that it threatens the virtue of objectivity which is an essential component of any publication. The government must also be ready to be subjected to checks and balances bearing in mind that its positions do not always reflect the interests of the majority. It is in this sense therefore that through the media, the people get the opportunity to share their views in order to reach a compromise that favours their cherished interests,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net

Media freedom is clearly streamlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which states in Article 19 that *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]”* Herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

BACKGROUND

The re-opening of Radio Las Anod came after successful deliberations between the management of the radio, members of the executive committee of Sool regional administration, local government officials, and the Regional Security Committee in Las Anod. The meeting was held at the home of the governor of Sool Ibrahim Jama' Dad.

The regional administration stated that the Station breached a decree previously issued by Puntland Vice President Hassan Dahir Afqura' ordering that anything involving Somaliland cannot be brought in Sool and that the radio misinformed the public about the children's vaccination program against Measles, which originally came from the territory of Somaliland. The programme supposed to have started on Jan 14th 2006, was stopped by the Puntland authorities and taken to Garowe, the headquarters of Puntland.

However, the management of the radio queried the allegations claiming their right to air issues concerning public suffering such as health matters.

The two sides agreed on the following positions after the meeting:

That the radio will perform its operations according to the law of Puntland.

That the radio shall respect the unity of Somalia particularly the interests of Puntland.

That instead of attacking the radio and shutting down the station or before any other action is taken, the regional administration or law enforcement bodies have to get in touch with editor Jamal Suleyman Warsame.

For these reasons, Governor Ibrahim Jama' Dad authoritatively announced Radio Las Anod re-opened

Earlier publication

Somalia's Radio Las Anod came under attack by government authorities Saturday morning following allegations that it was airing divisive information. Police raided the station early in the morning and arrested three employees; Director Faysal Jama' Adan, Editor of the Radio Jamal Suleyman Warsame and a technician though the case against them could not immediately be verified.

The National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) gathered earlier that the arrest of the said victims and subsequent closure of the station resulted from allegations that the station was airing divisive views of the people in Las Anod concerning diversion of children's vaccination program from Las Anod to Garowe, the headquarters of Puntland. The vaccination against Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Measles, Hepatitis and Tetanus was scheduled to start in Las Anod on Saturday 14 January. NUSOJ is a founding member of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net)

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: ETHIO 005/003/2006 (Public)

20 January 2006

KAMPALA: URGENT APPEAL FOR RELEASE OF ETHIOPIAN DETAINEES

Dear friends,

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders' Network (EHAHRD-Net) is appealing for your active support in campaigning on behalf of the following persons unfairly arrested and charged by the Ethiopian government. They include:

Hailu Shawel (m), Member of Parliament, President of the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) party, Civil Engineer Professor Mesfin Woldemariam (m), aged 75, founder and former Chair of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), Birtukan Mideksa (f), CUD Vice President, lawyer, former judge Dr Berhanu Negga (m), CUD Member of Parliament, Mayor of Addis Ababa, economist Getachew Mengiste (m), CUD Member of Parliament, former army officer Gizachew Shifferaw (m), CUD Member of Parliament, university professor Dr Hailu Araya (m), CUD Member of Parliament, former press editor, academic Dr Yacob Hailemariam (m), CUD Member of Parliament, lawyer, a former UN Special Envoy and a Prosecutor in

the Rwanda genocide tribunal, former Academic Debebe Eshetu (m), CUD public Relations Officer, artist Muluneh Eyual (m), CUD Secretary General, economist Daniel Bekele (m), policy director of the Ethiopian office of Action Aid (international non-governmental development organization), and a lawyer. Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) is a founder member of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network.

Others include: Netsanet Demissie (m), President of NGO Organization for Social Justice in Ethiopia, Dr Befekadu Degefe (m), CUD Member of Parliament, and economist.

All in all, 131 individuals and organizations were charged. The individual defendants, of whom about 88 are in custody, include 40 opposition party leaders or supporters detained since early November 2005; 10 newly-elected members of parliament; three prominent human rights defenders (Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demissie); 15 independent journalists; 30 people of Ethiopian origin who have been long resident abroad, including five journalists with the Voice of America radio station; and many members of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD).

Five independent news organizations have also been charged, and all four political parties belonging to the CUD coalition. Arrests are said to be continuing with more people likely to be charged.

Reports from Amnesty International indicate that the 131 defendants were split into groups facing different charges. The charges include; outrages against the constitution; obstructing the National Election Board; inciting and organizing armed uprising; endangering the integrity of the state; and high treason. Most are also charged with "genocide", on the basis of allegations of the beating of an ethnic Tigrayan, arson against the property of two Tigrayans, causing fear and mental harm to members of an ethnic group, and harming members of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) by excluding them from social events and funerals. Amnesty International was a co-organiser of the inaugural East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference held in Entebbe Uganda between the 31st of October and 4th of November 2005, leading to the formation of EHAHRD-Net.

All those named above are now known to have been charged on 21 December by the High Court in Addis Ababa with a range of criminal offences, most of which can carry the death penalty. All the defendants are currently held in Kaliti prison in Addis Ababa, with access to their families and legal representatives severely restricted, and not possible in private.

“The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network wishes to stress that some of the members charged were even not in the country at the time of the protests. They and a number of others were attending the inaugural conference for Human Rights Defenders in the East and Horn of Africa sub-region held at Entebbe, Uganda. There’s no way therefore they could have participated in the protests to prompt their arrest, given the fact that they have no record of involvement in inciting violence of any sort. Some of them have to date not been able to rejoin their families for fear of imminent arrest on their return,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net

Article 6 of the African Charter on Human and People’s rights adopted on June 27, 1981 provides that *“Everyone shall have the right to liberty and security of his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom [...], no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.”* Article 7 of the same Charter continues that *“Every individual shall have the right to have his cause heard [...] and the right to be tried within reasonable time by an impartial court or tribunal.”* Sadly, all these provisions have been overlooked by the Sudanese authorities.

To this effect, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network demands the Ethiopian government to immediately and unconditionally release the said persons or effect a fair, and justified trial within the shortest possible time, considering the length of time they have spent under arbitrary detention without trial.

The Network further calls upon the government to allow the detainees regular private access to their families and legal representatives while they remain in custody.

Background

Several thousand suspected government opponents from the CUD and other opposition parties are reportedly still detained without charge as a result of demonstrations that have been underway since November 2005 in Addis Ababa and other towns against alleged fraud in the parliamentary elections of 15 May 2005.

The ruling EPRDF gained two-thirds of the seats.

Police shot dead 42 demonstrators and wounded 200 others during the protests in early November. Schoolchildren, college students and teachers are among thousands of demonstrators detained in the past few weeks, particularly in Addis Ababa and the Amhara and Oromia regions. The protests led to violence on both sides, with many people reportedly severely beaten by soldiers and police and some killed. There have

been reports of detainees held incommunicado in rural prisons and army camps being tortured, with several deaths.

c.c Prime Minister

c.c Minister of Justice

c.c Federal Commissioner of Police

c.c Minister of Foreign Affairs,

c.c Ethiopian Ambassador to Uganda

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SUD 006/006/2006 (Public)

24 January 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net CONDEMNS HARASSMENT OF HRDs IN SUDAN

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) condemns the act by the Sudanese government authorities who are reported to have harassed HRDs including an Amnesty International representative attending a non-governmental organization (NGO) forum in Khartoum.

Reports say that security forces yesterday entered the building where the NGO Forum was being held and ordered all delegates to switch off their mobile phones. They said that the meeting was "unauthorized" and demanded the names of all participants. Participants, numbering approximately forty, were ordered to hand over all documents and laptops. Some resisted; the security forces forced upon their bags. Some small scuffles broke out. At this point more security forces entered and surrounded the room. Still and digital photographs, along with recorded videos, were taken of all the participants. Some participants were pushed, threatened, and told "you better do what

we say or you will face problems later". There were repeated demands to participants to hand over their belongings.

Amnesty International reports that the security forces later attempted to release those representing international groups, but hold back the Sudanese nationals. International participants resisted, fearing for the safety of the Sudanese colleagues left behind, but finally all were taken to the front gate where again attempts were made to separate the two until all participants were released.

Following the release of all participants, two were contacted by phone by the political section of national security and asked to meet with security officials. Faisal al Baqir 49 years old, a freelance journalist, member of Reporters Sans Frontieres, and associated with SOAT (Sudanese Organization Against Torture), and Dr. Nagib Najmedin 60 years old, who was one of the Chairs of the meeting, and the director of the local NGOs; the Amal Centre and the Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development were then taken from their residences to meet Saleh al Obeid, head of the Political Section of Sudanese National Security. They were told that although nothing was wrong with the meeting, "the timing was bad" presumably meaning that given the sensitivities around the AU, this meeting could be inflammatory. Amnesty International co-organised the inaugural East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference in Entebbe Uganda at the start of November last year.

EHAHRD-Net would like to stress the responsibility of the Sudan government towards the cause of HRDs as part of their obligations as stipulated in International Human Rights Instruments. The 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders Article 12 declares that the “ *State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse*

discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or

her legitimate exercise of the Rights referred to in the present Declaration .”

Therefore, judging from this provision among others, the State failed in its duty to protect these HRDs but rather participated in infringing on their rights.

“HRDs play an important role in ensuring that no one unlawfully interferes with anyone’s right to enjoy his or her freedom as by law provided. The Government and its machinery must therefore desist from any actions calculated to hinder the duties of HRDs,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net. “Such unprecedented threats and harassment as reported are a clear manifestation of the government’s continued crackdown on innocent HRDs. This is absolutely uncalled for,” adds Hassan Shire.

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network maintains that HRDs must enjoy the protection provided for by the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders which stresses in its very first Article that *the right individually and in association with others, to promote and strive for the realisation of human and fundamental rights* must be observed. The Network is ready to ensure the observance of this and other provisions of the Declaration by all countries in the region.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls upon the Sudan government to unconditionally observe international Human Rights instruments which have been put in place for the protection of the rights of Human Rights Defenders.

The Network further calls upon all the human rights defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Sudan government and other stakeholders to make this call a reality.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: ETHIO 007/003/2006 (Public)

25 January 2006

KAMPALA: EXPULSION OF AP REPORTER FROM ETHIOPIA UNFAIR-EHAHRD-Net

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) is unhappy with the Ethiopian authorities over the expulsion of a leading foreign journalist from the country. The arrest of Anthony Mitchell followed the victim's reporting of news regarding renewed clashes between police and protesters in the capital, Addis Ababa.

The government is reported to have “decided to expel Mitchell for tarnishing the image of the nation repeatedly, ‘contravening journalism ethics’ and disseminating information far from the truth about Ethiopia.” No further details were provided.

The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) quoted the *AP* Managing Editor Mike Silverman as having said in a statement that Mitchell, a British citizen, is an ‘aggressive and fair journalist’ who has worked in Ethiopia for more than five years, adding that he has also worked for the U.N. news agency IRIN. Mitchell’s departure is seen as a serious blow to the foreign press corps in Ethiopia.

EHAHRD-Net would like to reiterate the responsibility of the Ethiopian government towards the media fraternity as provided for in international human rights instruments and asks government in the same vein to observe the freedom of speech provided for by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration clearly states in Article 19, that “*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*” herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

“The media, commonly referred to as the fourth arm of government, plays an important role in ensuring accountability, checks and balances in public offices. The government must therefore desist from any actions calculated to hinder the duties of the media,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net. “The arrest of Mitchell is a prelude to government’s crackdown on the rights of journalists which is grossly uncalled for. Besides, the victim being a known international correspondent of a credible media organization ought to be treated with understanding and be accorded his right of speech without hindrance,” adds Hassan Shire.

BACKGROUND

The government has imprisoned several journalists and closed down many privately-owned media houses in the wake of clashes between opposition protesters and security forces in November. Fourteen detained journalists are among a group charged with treason and genocide, which carry a possible death penalty. The journalists are being harassed and jailed over cooked press offenses aimed at silencing the media from reporting the ongoing gross human rights violations in the country.

The November clashes followed similar protests in June against election results that the opposition says were rigged. Last Friday, police again opened fire on stone-throwing protesters as annual religious processions were turned into political protests for a second straight day. Mitchell reported this news for the *AP*. At least two people were killed and 40 injured in two days of clashes, according to Agence France-Presse.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls upon the Ethiopian government to observe freedom of the media as by law provided.

The Network further calls upon all the human rights defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Ethiopian government and other stakeholders to make this call a reality.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: UGA 008/008/2006 (Public)

03 February 2006

KAMPALA: UGANDA GOVERNMENT MUST OBSERVE MEDIA FREEDOM

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) has received with dismay the news of the arrest of three journalists working with Unity FM in Lira, Eastern Uganda over allegations that they aired statements aimed at de-campaigning candidate Yoweri Museveni.

The Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ) reported that the arrested include Managing Director of the Radio Jimmy Onapa Uhuru, the Station News Editor Joy Orwech and the News Caster Paul Oryong.

Reports further indicate that in a programme titled “Yabwang” which means Eye Opener, modulated by Onapa, and the co-presenters Oryong and Orwech, it is alleged that unknown callers opined that President Museveni was due to hold a rally in the town on Thursday but people were being ferried from other places like Moroto District to disguise the rally as “well attended.” The callers are further said to have indicated that these people were being collected from areas attacked by Meningitis and were likely to endanger other people’s lives.

Upon conviction, these media persons could be charged under “General Illegal Practice” for defamation, as well as “giving false information” and “the punishment is paying 48 currency units, equivalent to 960,000 Ugandan Shillings or two years imprisonment,” Police Spokesman Asuman Mugenyi is quoted to have said.

EHAHRD-Net wishes to remind the Ugandan government authorities of their responsibility as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which clearly states in Article 19, that “Everyone *has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*” herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

“The media is a watchdog of society and plays an important role of ensuring accountability and prompting checks and balances. It should be the duty of government therefore to ensure that media persons are not unduly hindered in the course of executing their duties because such arrests especially during this time of political transition where the people must have balanced opinion in order to make responsible decisions, could be construed as a signal of imminent crackdown on the freedom of the media,” Says Hassan Shire Sheikh the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Journalists are human rights defenders protected by the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The government must not be seen to infringe of the media freedom as this is key to attaining free and fair election.

BACKGROUND

The arrests followed a Programme titled “Yabwang” which means Eye Opener modulated then by Onapa, and co-presenters Oryong and Orwech where some callers alleged that President Museveni was due to hold a rally in the town on the 2nd of Feb, but that people were being ferried from places like Moroto District to disguise the rally as “well attended.”

The callers went on saying that the areas where these people were collected from, had been attacked by Meningitis which was likely to endanger other people's lives.

Soon after, a group of security officers including police in uniform and army officers in civilian clothes stormed the Radio Station premises, arrested the journalists and a search was carried out in all the station departments.

Wokulira G. Ssebaggala the Coordinator of Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ) quotes Police Spokesman Hajji Asuman Mugenyi as saying that, “the suspects are to be charged under General illegal Practice for defamation, as well as

giving false information and the punishment is paying a lump sum of about 960,000 Ugandan Shillings or two years imprisonment.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls on the Uganda government to unconditionally release the said victims or and to be impartial while judging their case.

The Network further calls upon all the human rights defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Uganda government to strictly observe media freedom especially as the country undergoes political transition

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SUD 009/006/2006 (Public)

14 February 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net WELCOMES RELEASE OF SUDANESE HRDs

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) welcomes the release of Sudanese HRDs who were yesterday arrested and held incommunicado without charge or trial. The release followed immediate pressure from Amnesty International and others soon after the arrest.

Alrayah Ibrahim Eldaw, Alfaris Ibrahim, Dawalbeit Kabbur and Osman Ali Ismael, staff members of a Non-Governmental Organization the Sudan Development Organization (SUDO), and Sayed Abu Bakr, a volunteer for SUDO, were arrested as they conducted a training session on human rights monitoring organized by SUDO in the town of Ed Dain, Southern Darfur.

“Whereas the news of the HRDs’ release is creditable, the Network wishes to re-echo the fact that they should not have been arrested in the first place. The Sudanese government must not arrest innocent Human Rights Defenders as this is not only a violation of its international obligations but acts to discourage the HRDs in their work of defending other people’s rights,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net

The HRDs were carrying out a genuine community cause, they are not known to have a record of crime to prompt their arrest and therefore the government was in the wrong to interrupt their activity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrest and harassment of staff of human rights organizations occurs frequently in all parts of Sudan but is particularly widespread in Darfur. Most recently, on 22 January, a meeting of Africa-focussed international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in cooperation with Sudanese NGOs, taking place in Khartoum during the African Union Summit was also broken up by security forces.

Participants were detained briefly and threatened. The authorities are apparently attempting to intimidate activists into ceasing their work. Sudanese Human Rights Defenders are more vulnerable to such intimidation, and receive less media attention than international humanitarian and human rights workers in Sudan, therefore making them an easier target for the authorities.

Darfur has been the scene of internal armed conflict since February 2003, when the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) took up arms against the government because of what they perceived as the lack of government protection for their people and the marginalization and underdevelopment of the Darfur region.

Fighting between these groups, government-backed forces and the Janjawid militia has led to the displacement of over 1.8 million people internally and 220,000 as refugees across the border with Chad.

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: KEN 010/004/2006 (Public)

22nd February 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net CONDEMNS MEDIA HARASSMENT IN KENYA

EHAHRD-Net has been irked by reports of media harassment in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi where police is said to have on Monday 21st Feb, raided two tabloid newspapers, arrested and detained several journalists.

Sources from the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) told EHAHRD-Net that three reporters and at least two other newspaper employees were in police detention and could face criminal charges. They include reporters Josphat Mativo, Ken Teyie, and Austin Alwaka; a receptionist, Catherine Oyando; and a printer, Paul Kimani. A freelance reporter is also said to have been arrested and later released.

The victims were reportedly arrested following a publication in this week's edition of the "Alternative Press" titled "Kibaki Senile," suggesting that President Mwai Kibaki was not in control of the government. Police also detained news vendors selling the "Alternative Press" publications, which are known for provocative reporting on sex and political scandals.

"Whereas EHAHRD-Net appreciates the need for good journalism and indeed positive reporting of the developments in the country, the positivity or negativity must not be judged using the government's tailored yardstick. Rather the journalists must be accorded their freedom of expression and opinion in their bid to guide societal perspective of the issues that concern them. This freedom of opinion and expression is a provision of international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore any actions calculated to infringe on the journalists' rights are a blatant violation that must stop henceforth," says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights maintains that "*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*" herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

Journalists are recognised by the Network as Human Rights Defenders and are therefore covered by the protection provided in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Kenyan government must not be seen to infringe on the media freedom as this is key to attaining checks and balances in government.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls on the Kenyan government to unconditionally release the said victims or and to be impartial while judging their case.

The Network further calls upon all the Human Rights Defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Kenyan government to strictly observe media freedom as stipulated in international Human Rights Instruments to which Kenya subscribes.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: KEN 011/004/2006 (Public)

01 March 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net CONDEMNS CONTINUED MEDIA HARASSMENT IN KENYA

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network is deeply concerned about the deteriorating relationship between the Kenyan government and the media.

In less than two weeks so far, government has detained journalists from at least two media houses over stories related to President Mwai Kibaki. On Monday 21st February 2006, police raided two tabloid newspapers, arrested and detained several journalists (Ref; *EHAHRD-Net: KEN 010/004/2006*). The latest development as of 28th February 2006 indicates that police again detained three journalists with the independent *East African Standard* for questioning in connection with a story that appeared in Saturday's

edition, sources from EHAHRD-Net members in Kenya, and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), said.

Incidentally the media worldwide, acts as the “eyes and ears” of society; it must therefore be accorded the freedom and independence it deserves to perform its crucial role of effecting checks and balances within the government. This freedom of opinion and expression is a provision of the Kenyan Constitution and international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Therefore, the detention of journalists does not only create a communication gap, but denies the public its freedom of access to information,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net

Journalists are frontline Human Rights Defenders and are therefore covered by the protection provided in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998.

BACKGROUND

The detentions stem from an article headlined “Kalonzo, Kibaki in secret meeting,” which claimed that President Mwai Kibaki had held a secret meeting with Kalonzo Musyoka, a Member of Parliament from the ruling NARC coalition. Musyoka was one of several cabinet ministers fired after they campaigned against Kibaki’s controversial draft constitution, which was defeated in a referendum in November 2005. The *East African Standard* reported that “the former minister is said to have expressed a readiness to rejoin the government and take the vice president’s slot,” and called the meeting “one of the most sophisticated political maneuvers by the president yet.”

The latest detainees include the weekend edition’s Managing Director, Chaacha Mwita, Sub-Editor Dennis Onyango, and Reporter Ayub Savula.

Chaacha has been summoned by a local independent media regulatory body, the Media Council, to appear before its Ethics and Complaints Commission on Thursday.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net calls upon all the Human Rights Defenders in the region to urgently appeal to the Kenyan government to strictly observe media freedom as stipulated in its own constitution as well as international human rights instruments to which Kenya subscribes.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: SUD 012/006/2006 (Public)

14 March 2006

KAMPALA: URGENT APPEAL FOR RELEASE OF SUDANESE HRD

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders' Network (EHAHRD-Net) is appealing for your urgent support in campaigning on behalf of Hussain Osman Mohamed Ismail (32) a student and HRD who was on 10th March 2006 arbitrarily arrested by military intelligence officers in Toker, Eastern Sudan.

The Network has learnt from the Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT) that Ismail, a member of SOAT students network had gone to Toker to carry out investigations on human rights violations committed in 1997. No reasons have been advanced for the victim's arrest and there are wide fears that he could be tortured while in incommunicado detention. SOAT is a founding member of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, currently acting as the Network's focal organisation for HRDs in Sudan.

"Mr. Hussain Osman Mohamed Ismail should not have been detained for merely conducting usual human rights work of monitoring and investigating alleged human rights violations committed by the state. The Sudan government being signatory to various regional and international Human Rights Instruments, must desist from actions intended to quash the legitimate efforts of human rights defenders to defend basic rights of their own people," says Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Article 6 of the African Charter on Human and People's rights adopted on June 27, 1981 provides that "*Everyone shall have the right to liberty and security of his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom [...], no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.*" Sadly, this provision has been overlooked by the Sudanese authorities yet equally important; the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998 provides that "*Everyone has the right, individually and in association*

with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.”

BACKGROUND:

Human-rights activists dealing with human-rights abuses in Sudan have been persecuted, arrested or forced into exile, which has severely limited their ability to speak out when rights are threatened. Sudan has a record of harassing and arresting HRDs, holding them incommunicado in detention cells without access to private visits from family and legal counsel. The Sudanese government continued to arbitrarily detain and torture HRDs, apparently for their work to defend internationally recognized human rights standards.

The government uses a prolonged detention without charge or trial against suspected political opponents or critics of the government: Those arrested are still held for days, weeks, and sometimes months without access to the outside world.

APPEAL

To this effect, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network demands the Sudan government to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release the victim or effect a fair hearing into his case;
- Allow him immediate and unrestricted access to his family and any medical treatment that he may require;
- Take all necessary measures to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Hussain Osman Mohamed Ismail;
- Ensure that Mr. Hussain Osman Mohamed Ismail has access to legal advice;
- Respect international human rights instruments to which it duly subscribes;
- Guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the country as internationally provided.

Appeal should be sent to:

His Excellency Omar Hassan al-Bashir
President of the Republic of Sudan
President's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 783223

His Excellency Salva Kiir Mayardit

First Vice-President
People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 771025

His Excellency Ali Osman Mohamed Taha

Vice-President
People's Palace

PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 771025

Mr. Lam Akol Ajawin

Minister of Foreign Affairs

PO Box 873, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 779383

Mr. Al Zubeir Beshir Taha

Minister of Interior

PO Box 873, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 779383

Dr. Abdelmuneim Osman Mohamed Taha

Advisory Council for Human Rights

PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 770883

Sudanese Embassy in your own country

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: SUD 013/006/2006 (Public)

17 March 2006

TO: His Excellency Omar Hassan al-Bashir
President of the Republic of Sudan
President's Palace
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 783223

Thru: Hassan Ibrahim Gad Karim
Sudanese Ambassador to Uganda
Embassy of Sudan
Plot 21 Nakasero Road
P.O Box 3000200
Kampala, Uganda

KAMPALA: PETITION AGAINST CONTINUED HARASSMENT OF HRDs IN SUDAN

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders' Network (EHAHRD-Net) continues to receive alarming reports about your government's harassment of individuals and groups working to protect the rights of others.

The Network notes that on March 15th 2006, officers from the National Security Bureau (NSB) in Port Sudan, Eastern Sudan summoned Hassan Altaieb, lawyer and SOAT monitor in Port Sudan to their offices for questioning. He was questioned about an event scheduled to be held in Port Sudan on March 16th 2006 as part of a nationwide campaign for the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The end result of Altaieb's questioning was that the convention was cancelled.

More so, on March 13th 2006, the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the body that governs humanitarian agencies in Sudan ordered closure of the offices of the Sudan Social Development Organisation (SUDO) in Al-Jeneina, capital of West Darfur State and Zalingei, West Darfur State.

Further concern is about the March 10th 2006 arrest by military intelligence officers in Toker, Eastern Sudan of Hussain Osman Mohamed Ismail (32) a student and member of SOAT. No clear charges were defined against him and he was detained without trial.

Previously, a columnist with Al-Sahafa Zuhair Al-Sarraj was arrested on January 5th 2006 following his comment that appeared in the paper about Your Excellency's possible indifference towards the problems of Sudanese citizens.

The Network emphasizes that the above violations are a contradiction to the pledge by your government to respect internationally recognised human rights instruments including; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 10 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights: Articles 5 and 6 of the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) on the freedom of the Press; and indeed a number of other provisions by your own Sudan Interim National Constitution.

We respectfully therefore urge Your Excellency to;

- Avoid unnecessary intervention in civil society meetings in future and allow the CEDAW convention to take place on any other day the organisers will select.
- Immediately investigate and provide reasons for the cancellation of the event;
- Immediately and unconditionally re-open the SUDO offices that were closed
- Immediately and unconditionally release the student HRD that was arrested
- Respect international human rights instruments to which your country is signatory, by allowing human rights defenders to operate without any hindrance
- Provide guarantee that those arrested and detained are accorded a fair trial
- Take necessary measures to ensure that the Sudan government respects the freedom of expression and of the media, which is an essential component in ensuring checks and balances in government

Signed:

HASSAN SHIRE SHEIKH (Chairperson)

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROJECT
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Website: <http://www.yorku.ca/crs/AHRDP/home.htm>

Appeal should be sent to:

cc: His Excellency Salva Kiir Mayardit

First Vice President

People's Palace

P.O Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 183 771025

cc: His Excellency Ali Osman Mohamed Taha

Vice-President

People's Palace

P.O Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

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cc: Mr. Lam Akol Ajawin

Minister of Foreign Affairs

P.O Box 873, Khartoum, Sudan

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cc: Mr. Al Zubeir Beshir Taha

Minister of Interior

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Fax: + 249 183 779383

cc: Dr. Abdelmuneim Osman Mohamed Taha
Advisory Council for Human Rights
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Khartoum, Sudan
Fax: + 249 183 770883

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: ETHIO 014/003/2006 (Public)

23 March 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net WELCOMES DROPPING OF CHARGES AGAINST VOA JOURNALISTS

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) welcomes the dropping of charges against five Voice of America journalists and another radio journalist being tried in absentia.

Network members in Ethiopia say that the dropping of charges against the journalists by an Ethiopian court follows a State prosecutor's request to drop charges of treason and genocide against them.

However, much as it welcomes the court action in favour of the victims, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network wishes to remind the Ethiopian Government that media freedom is not granted by the government but it is a provision of international human rights instruments which must be adhered to without fail.

This media freedom is clearly highlighted by not only the Ethiopian Constitution but also regional and international human rights instruments, in particular Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which emphasizes that "*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*". Herein lies the inalienable freedom

of the press. The Ethiopian government must therefore adhere to this provision without fail.

“The act of threatening journalists with blown up charges and later dropping the charges, is highly condemned and is a great shame to the Ethiopian government. Journalists must be free to do their work without interference from those in authority,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net. “The media as a watchdog of society plays an important role of ensuring accountability, checks and balances in public offices and any attempt to crack down on its free operation risks to create biased reporting which is an automatic denial of the public right to balanced information,” Shire adds.

BACKGROUND

The government has imprisoned several journalists and closed down many privately-owned media houses in the wake of clashes between opposition protesters and security forces last year in which over 50 people lost their lives. A number of journalists are detained among a group charged with treason and genocide, which carry a possible death penalty. The journalists are being harassed and jailed over blown up press offenses aimed at silencing the media from reporting the ongoing gross human rights violations in the country.

The November clashes followed similar protests in June 2005 against election results that the opposition says were rigged.

APPEAL

EHAHRD-Net calls upon the Ethiopian government to immediately and unconditionally free the journalists under detention and also drop charges against many others exiled because of threats of arrest, or effect a speedy and fair trial; and to desist from any such unlawful intimidation of journalists in future.

The Network appeals to all Human Rights Defenders to call upon the Ethiopian government to heed this cause without fail.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: KEN 015/004/2006 (Public)

03 April 2006

KAMPALA: ARREST OF UGANDAN JOURNALIST IN KENYA CONDEMNED

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network condemns the Kenyan police's arrest of a Ugandan journalist, Hassan Isilow. The journalist who writes for Zimbabwe's *Sunday Times* is said to have been arrested over an alleged story he published about President Mwai Kibaki.

Sources from Network members in Kenya indicate that Mr. Isilow was arrested on Friday at the Busia Border district on his way to Kenya. The Daily Monitor (Monday 3rd April) reported that Isilow's arrest had links to an allegedly defamatory story against President Mwai Kibaki over the siege and closure of The *East African Standard Newspaper* in Kenya at the start of March. Isilow is also a freelance with the Daily Monitor.

"It is very unfortunate that the Kenyan government has continued to harass journalists because of their work of exposing the wrong doings within public offices. Journalists are the eyes and ears of the people and are helpful in ensuring accountability which is an essential requirement for good governance. Therefore, the actions of the government aimed at silencing the media are totally uncalled for and must be condemned by all those who cherish democracy," says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Unfortunately, this arrest and many other incidents targeting journalists are a total violation against an institution that is seen as the fourth arm of government worldwide and whose freedom is a provision of not only the Kenyan Constitution, but also international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As such, the arrest of Isilow sends a message that the Kenyan government is violating international human rights instruments to which it is signatory. Such acts of intimidating journalists must stop with immediate effect.

BACKGROUND:

Kenyan journalists are facing one of the most intimidating moments in recent history as a result of their active coverage of issues surrounding the current leadership. Having been very vibrantly involved in the 2002 Presidential elections and later the referendum, the media fraternity has come under fire; and there's widespread concern that the subsequent actions of media harassment could be aimed at silencing journalists ahead of the 2007 general elections.

In recent events, government has detained journalists from at least two media houses over cases related to stories about President Mwai Kibaki. On 21st February 2006, police raided two tabloid newspapers, arrested and detained several journalists (Ref; *EHAHRD-Net: KEN 010/004/2006*); and hardly a week later, police again detained three journalists with the independent *East African Standard* for questioning in connection with a story on political intrigue.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net strongly advises the Kenyan authorities to immediately and unconditionally effect the release of the arrested journalist and desist from any such violations against media freedom. We call upon all human rights defenders in the region to raise an alarm so as to make this call a reality.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SOMA 016/005/2006 (Public)

21 April 2006

KAMPALA: THREATS AGAINST SOMALI PHOTOJOURNALIST CONDEMNED

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) condemns unnecessary threats against Somali photojournalist, Abdullahi Hassan Ghedi commonly known as Januune. Januune is accused of maliciously taking a photograph of businessman and member of the newly formed Coalition of Counterterrorism and Peace, Bashir Ragge Shirar.

Sources from the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) in Mogadishu have reported that following the allegation, the journalist has been receiving messages from Ragge's supporters threatening his life. NUSOJ is a founding member of the Network.

“Journalists are human rights defenders whose work is important in informing and alerting the public about issues that concern them. One way to do this is through photographs. However, whereas the Network does not condone photographs taken with malice aforethought, which in this case the journalist himself denies, threats against him because of his work are totally uncalled for. Therefore, the Somali government must come out strongly to protect the life of this and other journalists who may be facing undue threats from elements within the public,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Such unfortunate threats are sadly not targeted at the said journalist as an individual, but send scare signals to an institution (Media) that is widely viewed worldwide as the forth arm of government-thus the more need for protection. Media freedom to operate is a provision of not only the Somali Transitional Federal Charter, but also international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), particularly article 19. The article states that, “Everyone *has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*” herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

APPEAL:

EHAHRD-Net strongly appeals to the Somali authorities to immediately offer protection to Januune and ensure no harm is inflicted on him.

Brief background of EHAHRD-Net:

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) brings together over 65 human rights organizations from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and International Partners; Canada, Germany, Norway, UK, the U.S and the Netherlands.

The Network with its Secretariat in Kampala, Uganda, envisions a region in which the human rights of every citizen as stipulated in the UDHR are respected and upheld. Its mission is to maximize the protection of Human Rights Defenders working in the region and to enhance the awareness of human rights work through linkages with national, regional and international like-minded entities.

The Objectives of the Network are:

- To protect and defend HRDs in the region
- To build the capacity of HRDs and
- To advocate and raise public awareness and profiles of HRDs

For further information, please contact:

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EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: ETHIO 017/003/2006 (Public)

26 April 2006

KAMPALA: CONTINUED MEDIA HARASSMENT MUST STOP - EHAHRD-Net

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) continues to monitor the continued deterioration of media freedom in Ethiopia that has witnessed the arrest of several journalists. Most recently, the Network has learnt that Wosonseged Gebrekidan, editor of the now banned *Addis Zena* Newspaper (already jailed on anti-state charges), was on April 18, 2006 sentenced to 16 months for defamation while freelance writer Abraham Reta has been sentenced to one year. Earlier in February this year, Goshu Moges, who publishes and contributes to the Amharic-language weekly newspaper *Lisane Hezeb* and a monthly magazine under a similar name, was also arrested over anti-state charges.

“The continued detention of journalists over trumped up charges must immediately be halted in order to give way to the internationally cherished freedom of the media. The media is a watchdog of society and is an essential tool in effecting checks and balances in government. Any attempts to silence the media risk denying the public the right to information which is not only a provision of the Ethiopian Federal Constitution but also several international human rights instruments to which Ethiopia is signatory,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) rightly states that, “*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes*

freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]” herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

BACKGROUND

Gebrekidan, the editor of the now banned *Addis Zena* newspaper, is one of at least 14 journalists on trial with dozens of opposition leaders for allegedly trying to overthrow the Ethiopian constitutional order. They were arrested in a crackdown following anti-state protests in November last year and could face a death sentence or life imprisonment under the country’s Criminal Code. Many others are under hiding in exile. Over 50 people died while many others sustained serious injuries during violent protests in the capital Addis Ababa. Since the start of the crackdown, several journalists have been sentenced to prison terms on old charges under the press law.

Gebrekidan, already serving an eight-month sentence for defamation handed down in December 2005 now received a 16-month sentence for an article that appeared in 2002 and which allegedly defamed the editor of *Abyotawi Democracy*, a publication of the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The piece appeared in the Amharic language weekly *Ethiop*, of which he was editor at the time.

Sources from the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) have been quoted as saying, “Prime Minister Meles Zenawi told a CPJ delegation in March that the government had decided several years ago **not** to prosecute under the 1992 press law, and that this was still government policy. He said he was not aware that cases had been reactivated, and that he would look into the matter.” Despite the encouragement from the Prime Minister, it’s unfortunate that journalists like Gebrekidan and Reta are facing the same old law supposed to be outdated.

APPEAL:

The Network calls upon the Ethiopian Government to henceforth stop the harassment targeting journalists and other media workers; release the victims immediately and unconditionally or effect a fair trial of the arrested journalists. All human rights defenders within the region should raise a concerted alarm to help make justice a reality.

Brief background of EHAHRD-Net:

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) brings together over 65 human rights organizations from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and International Partners; Canada, Germany, Norway, UK, the U.S and the Netherlands.

The Network with its Secretariat in Kampala, Uganda, envisions a region in which the human rights of every citizen as stipulated in the UDHR are respected and upheld. Its mission is to maximize the protection of Human Rights Defenders working in the region

and to enhance the awareness of human rights work through linkages with national, regional and international like-minded entities.

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For further information, please contact:

Tumusiime Kabwende Deo

Press Officer

Regional Coordination Office

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EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: UGA 018/008/2006 (Public)

03rd May 2006

KAMPALA: MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 3RD MAY 2006 BY HASSAN SHIRE SHEIKH, Chairperson East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net)

Dear friends,

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) wishes to congratulate all journalists within the region upon the occasion of World Press Freedom Day.

This is a day to remind ourselves, our audiences and most of all our governments about the right to freedom of the press which from time to time has been ignored or rather

trampled over. Freedom of the Press is not only provided for by individual countries' constitutions but also international human rights instruments to which they are signatory. Most importantly, this freedom is clearly entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 19, which says that "*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]*" herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press. This international human rights document was signed by all governments of the world and cannot therefore be shelved, but should be honored as a primary document in a bid to ensure sanity in the way the media is handled.

"The notion of the media being considered worldwide as the forth arm of government cannot be over-emphasized. Media workers are human rights defenders on the frontline commonly referred to as watchdog; they are the eyes and ears of society, helpful in ensuring accountability, which is an essential requirement for good governance. Therefore, any actions aimed at silencing the media are totally uncalled for and must be condemned by all those who cherish democracy," says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

The Network has documented and reacted to many cases across the region involving murder, torture, unlawful detentions, intimidation and harassment of journalists, and shall not sit back as governments violate their own citizens' rights. According to a review by the *Freedom House* that rates countries as free, partly free or not free, only a few of the countries in our sub-region are said to be partly free while most are sadly rated as "not free" (*Monitor Editorial, Wednesday 03rd, May 2006*) and in this case, particular attention ought to be directed to stateless Somalia where journalists are at a very high risk of being murdered in the course of their reporting.

"We pledge to continue advocating for journalists' rights and assure all those being harassed of immediate attention and subsequent protection as trouble unfolds. Heads of governments from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, must ensure that their respective government bodies commonly involved in harassing journalists stop such acts henceforth," adds Shire.

Finally, it is our great hope that with concerted efforts, press freedom shall one day be achieved. To this end therefore, all Human Rights Defenders must keep the vigilance and pressure on regional governments to make the cause of press freedom a reality.

Brief background of EHAHRD-Net:

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) brings together over 65 human rights organizations from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and International Partners; Canada, Germany, Norway, UK, the U.S and the Netherlands.

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The Objectives of the Network are:

To protect and defend HRDs in the region

To build the capacity of HRDs and

To advocate and raise public awareness and profiles of HRDs

Embargoed for 09th May 2006

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: UGA 019/008/2006 (Public)

9th May 2006

KAMPALA: MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 39TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS, BANJUL, THE GAMBIA (09th -23rd May, 2006)

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) is pleased to participate in the forthcoming occasion of the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The Network wishes to use this opportunity to call upon the African Commission to take special consideration of the various Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the sub-region of the East and Horn of Africa, who are facing harassment from their home governments as a result of the human rights work they do for their people. This work makes them prone to intimidation, and therefore, prompting a dire need for immediate protection.

The 1998 UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, since its adoption, has turned out to be a fundamental document for the Network and an inspiration for the various Human Rights Defenders within the sub-region, as it spells out rights towards authorities and provides for protection against their violation.

Since the Human Rights Defenders Conference for the East and Horn of Africa held in November 2005 at Entebbe, Uganda (jointly organized by EHAHRDP, Centre for Refugee Studies at York University Canada and Amnesty International's Africa Regional Office), which brought together more than 50 Human Rights Defenders from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and international partners; Canada, Germany, Norway, UK, the US and the Netherlands, the Network has taken the challenge of attending to continued violations against Human Rights Defenders in most of the sub-region as indicated in the following country overview:

ETHIOPIA: The human rights situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated since the May 15th 2005 Elections, which were much criticised by internal and external observers. In the aftermath of the elections, demonstrations by the opposition party claiming electoral fraud led to killings by the security forces of over 80 opposition supporters and the arrest of several human rights defenders. The founder of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, 14 journalists and three Civil Society activists are now unfairly on trial for treason and other possibly capital offences. Other human rights defenders have been forced into exile. Network members attending the Human Rights Defenders Conference in Entebbe, unanimously adopted a petition appealing to the Ethiopian authorities to release these prisoners of conscience. However, to date there has not been positive response.

SOMALIA: Journalists in Somalia have had a bitter share of human rights violations in the country with numerous arrests, detentions and threats. The Network has lately noted an incident where a photojournalist, Abdullahi Hassan Ghedi ("Januune") was in April 2006 threatened by a prominent businessman over allegedly taking "a malicious photograph" while the journalists Faysal Jama Adan and Jamal Suleyman Warsame, Director and Editor of Radio Las Anod, and Awale Jama Salad, were arrested and later released over allegedly divisive programmes that were running on the station concerning vaccination against various diseases, and others. It is against such a background that *Freedom House*, an institution that rates countries as free, partly free or not free according to the level of violations, ranked Somalia among other countries within the region as "not free".

SUDAN: Sudan has been in no better situation, seeing the arrest of *Al-Sahafa* columnist Zuhair Al-Sarraj (January 2006), the harassment of Human Rights Defenders attending an NGO Forum in Khartoum (January 2006) and the arrest of Mohammed Ismail, a student Human Rights Defender (March 2006). In this case too, the Network petitioned the Sudanese President Omar El Bashir on March 17, 2006 over the continued deterioration of the Human Rights Defenders' situation in the country.

UGANDA: The deportation of Blake Lambert, a correspondent with Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (March 2006), the arrest and later release of Andrew Mwenda, a presenter with KFM Radio (August 2005), and intimidation of journalists during the recently concluded national elections have been some of the cases that aimed

at Human Rights Defenders and were noted by the Network. Uganda is one among those countries that are rated “partly free” by *Freedom House*.

KENYA: In Kenya, (21st February 2006) the Standard Newspaper was raided by police, who burnt copies, disabled the printing plant and detained several journalists. Days later, Managing Director Chaacha Mwita, Sub-Editor Dennis Onyango and Reporter Ayub Savula were also detained, while KTN, a television station of the Standard Group was closed. These incidents were a result of stories related to President Mwai Kibaki.

ERITREA: The situation in Eritrea has equally been bad with the arrest of at least 16 journalists detained incommunicado and the private press banned since September 2001. Those arrested include; Zemenfes Haile, Ghebrehiwet Keleta, Amanuel Asrat, Medhanie Haile, Yusuf Mohamed, Mattewos Habteab, Temesgen Ghebreyesus, Said Abdelkader, Dawit Isaac, Seyoum Tsehaye, Dawit Habtemichael Fesshaye "Joshua" Yohannes Selamynghe Beyene, Hamid Mohammed, Saidia Ahmed, and Saleh Aljezeeri. Most of these were arrested in 2001 and 2002 over cases related to their journalistic work. Meantime, the three Trade Unionists Tewelde Gebremedhin, Minassie Andezion and Habtom Woldemichael have been held incommunicado and without charge since 30 March 2005. They were arrested at the Office of the National Federation of Eritrean Workers. Further attempts to silence Human Rights Defenders within the country have made it impossible for any human rights organisation to exist.

This general country overview indicates a very unfriendly relationship between the various governments and organisations fighting for the observance of human rights. To this end therefore, the Network would like to re-emphasise the Africa Commission's view on incommunicado detention by re-echoing that it is a gross human rights violation that can lead to other violations such as torture or ill-treatment or interrogation without due process safeguards.

“Aware that the African Commission holds the view that the lawfulness and necessity of holding someone in custody must be determined by a court or any other appropriate judicial authority, the decision to keep a person in detention should therefore be reviewed periodically so that the grounds justifying the detention can be assessed. In any event therefore, detention should not continue beyond the period for which the State can provide appropriate justification and as such, persons suspected of committing any crime must be promptly charged with legitimate criminal offences,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Network.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Network calls upon the African Commission's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to pay visits to countries within the sub-region to familiarize herself with the gravity of violations being committed, in order to effect immediate intervention with the authorities.

Furthermore, the Network appeals to the international community to support the office of the Special Rapporteur to enable her to monitor and document violations directed at Human Rights Defenders, particularly within the most affected countries. Notably, many countries have defied international human rights standards either because of dissent with or ignorance of the existence of such important provisions. It is in this vain therefore that the African Commission must re-ignite the call for adherence in order to make human rights observance a reality.

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EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRDN Index: SUD 020/006/2006 (Public)

19 May 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net APPEALS FOR RELEASE OF DETAINED SUDANESE LAWYERS

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) has learnt of the unfortunate detention of two Lawyer HRDs by Sudan's National Security Agency (NSA). Human Rights Lawyers; Mossaad Mohamed Ali, the Coordinator of the Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in Nyala, state capital of South Darfur and Adam Mohamed Shareif, member of the Amel Centre's network of Lawyers, are being held in NSA offices in Nyala. "Mossaad Mohamed Ali was previously summoned by the National Security Agency in November 2005 following a visit by the Bar Human Rights Committee (the international human rights

arm of the Bar of England and Wales) and the Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT).”

According to Amnesty International reports, the two men were on 15th May summoned to the NSA offices and later released the same day. They were however detained on May 16th with no reason given for their detention. The NSA has refused to allow the UN Mission in Sudan to see them, even though the authorities are supposed to allow the UN unrestricted access to all detainees held in Darfur. Amnesty International was a co-organiser of the conference that inaugurated the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network held in Entebbe Uganda in November 2005.

“The Government of Sudan must provide some ray of hope to the already suffering people in the Darfur region by avoiding any level of infringement on the due process of justice. These Lawyers are defenders of human rights and must therefore not be threatened in any way in the course of their duty. Their right to protection as Human Rights Defenders is provided for by the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and therefore, this important international human rights instrument and others, must be respected,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Article 12 of the 1998 United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom declares that *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the Rights referred to in the present Declaration .”*

BACKGROUND:

The Sudan Government has had a history of continued incommunicado detaining of HRDs without trial and sometimes holding them for longer periods because of their human rights work and most particularly those working in the Darfur region. The Amel Centre situated in Nyala has helped many displaced persons forced to flee their homes by the fighting in the region, and offered treatment to hundreds of others living camps.

The Sudan Government on 5th May 2006 signed the Darfur Peace Agreement with a promise to release the detainees in the Darfur conflict and to allow the Peace Keeping Civil Police unlimited access to the detention centres.

APPEAL:

The Network calls upon the Sudan Government to immediately and unconditionally release the detained Lawyers or effect a fair trial; and to respect international human rights instruments to which Sudan is signatory by allowing human rights defenders to operate without any undue hindrance.

All Network members are encouraged to appeal to the Sudan authorities to make this call a reality.

Brief background of EHAHRD-Net:

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) brings together over 65 human rights organizations from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and International Partners; Canada, Germany, Norway, UK, the U.S and the Netherlands.

The Network with its Secretariat in Kampala, Uganda, envisions a region in which the human rights of every citizen as stipulated in the UDHR are respected and upheld. Its mission is to maximize the protection of Human Rights Defenders working in the region and to enhance the awareness of human rights work through linkages with national, regional and international like-minded entities.

The Objectives of the Network are:

To protect and defend HRDs in the region

To build the capacity of HRDs and

To advocate and raise public awareness and profiles of HRDs

For further information, please contact:

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Send appeals to:

Governor of South Darfur State

Al-Hajj Atta al-Manan

C/o People's Palace, P.O. Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

People's Palace, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: +249 711 832535

Salutation: Dear Sir

Mr Salva Kiir Mayardit

First Vice-President, People's Palace, PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 183 779977

+ 249 183 780796 (Please mark, "FAO First Vice-President")

Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of the National Security Agency

Nyala, South Darfur, Sudan

Fax: +249 7118 33191

Mr Muhammad Ali al-Maradhi

Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Ministry of Justice, Khartoum, Sudan

Fax: + 249 183 780796 (Please mark, "FAO Minister of Justice")

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Salutation: Dear Minister

2.1 COPIES TO:

Dr Abdel Moneim Osman Taha

Rapporteur, Advisory Council for Human Rights, Khartoum, Sudan

Email: human_rights_sudan@hotmail.com

Send also copies to diplomatic representatives of Sudan accredited to your country.

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: SOMA 021/005/2006 (Public)

31st May 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net CONDEMNS ARREST OF HRD IN SOMALIA, FEAR OF TORTURE AND INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders' Network (EHAHRD-Net) highly condemns the arrest and ill-treatment of Mr. Abdi Farah Mohamed, the Regional office Coordinator of the Peace and Human Rights Network (PHRN). He was reportedly arrested by Puntland Authorities following an attempt by Civil Society

groups in the area to hold a rally, calling on Mogadishu Islamic Courts and Alliance for Peace and Anti Terrorism to end fighting that has claimed the lives of many Civilians.

According to information and pictures received from PHRN, a founding member of EHAHRD-Net based in Mogadishu, the victim is in chains and we fear that he could be subjected to cruel and degrading treatment.

“The arrest of Mr. Abdi Farah Mohamed cannot go unattended especially that it acts to scare any other human rights advocates that may be out on the frontline fighting without weapons to secure the lives of innocent Somalis. The Somali Federal Government and local Puntland administration must respect the provisions of their national and regional Transitional Charter to ensure the observance of human rights contained therein without fail; they must equally desist from the senseless arrest of human rights advocates,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, the Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights accords everyone the freedom of expression and freedom to hold opinions without any hindrance. Quoted verbatim, the Article states that *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]”*

APPEAL:

The Network appeals to the Somali Federal Government and Puntland authorities to:
Immediately stop the torture being inflicted on Mr. Abdi Farah Mohamed
Immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Abdi Farah Mohamed or effect a fair and public trial of his case.
Avoid unnecessary intervention in civil society meetings in future
Take necessary measures to ensure the respect of the freedom of Opinion and Expression, which are essential components in ensuring checks and balances on government’s actions

All Network members across the sub-region should condemn such acts of lawlessness and appeal to the Somali authorities to immediately let justice have its way in the victim’s case.

For further information, please contact

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EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public Statement

EHAHRD-Net Index: SOMA 022/005/2006 (Public)
20th June 2006

KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net WARNS AGAINST CONTINUED MEDIA HARASSMENT IN SOMALIA

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders' Network (EHAHRD-Net) highly condemns the continued infringement on media freedom by the Somali Federal Government.

The Network continues to receive reports from its members based in Mogadishu indicating that the situation in the country is appalling. In the latest events, Radio Shabelle, the only FM station in the country, was reportedly closed down on Monday 19th June by government forces, and journalists Mohamed Adawe and Ali Mohamed Saed were detained, accused of airing a story about Ethiopian soldiers allegedly having crossed into Somalia. Earlier, reports from the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), a founding member of EHAHRD-Net, indicated that Mohammed Abdi Urad, the editor of Jamhuuriya daily newspaper in Hargeisa was arrested following an article published in the newspaper on June 2nd in which a reader expressed his opinion about the current situation in the country.

“It is very unfortunate to see that the media is being targeted in such a manner yet this is an institution that is dedicated to serving the information needs of the people. The media is a watchdog of society and has the role of ensuring accountability in public offices, an essential component for good governance. Compromising free operation of the media therefore is likely to worsen the already wanting democratic situation in Somalia, and must stop,” says Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

The Network hereby condemns these acts and wishes to remind the Somali Federal Government that the freedom of the press is provided for by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This International human rights instrument, and others, must be respected without fail. Article 19 of the UDHR states that “*Everyone has the right to*

freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [...]” Herein lies the inalienable freedom of the press.

APPEAL:

The Network appeals to the Somali Federal Government to immediately stop the harassment of journalists and desist from creating an unnecessary communication gap by closing down media houses.

All Network members across the sub-region should condemn such government actions and appeal to the Somali authorities to respect the various international human rights instruments that provide for the free operation of the media institution.

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